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Public Comment before the Commerce & Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committees

Joint Public Comment on Jobs Initiatives

Jillian Gilchrest, Early Care and Education Policy Analyst

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Founded in 1910, Connecticut Association for Human Services promotes family economic security strategies that empower low-income working families to achieve financial independence. CAHS takes a deliberate role in advocacy for the development and implementation of a cohesive early care and education system. CAHS is a member of the Connecticut Early Childhood Alliance, a state advocacy organization committed to improving developmental outcomes in the areas of learning, health, safety and economic security for children ages birth to eight.

Connecticut is experiencing rising poverty, falling income, and high unemployment. I applaud the Legislature and the Governor for recognizing the urgency of this matter and calling a special session to address the needs of Connecticut's economy and workforce. Understanding full well that this session is about immediate actions that can be taken to make Connecticut more competitive, spur innovation, support small business, drive workforce development and strengthen and streamline existing economic tools, I would be remiss not to mention a vital component of Connecticut's economy, the Early Childhood sector.

In this time of economic strain, early childhood programs are as important as ever to support parents and to prepare children for school success. Connecticut can do two things regarding early childhood that will have a positive impact on jobs and those struggling in this economy:

1. Ensure that child care is available for people who are working, looking for work, or enrolled in training and education programs to improve their employability, so that their children will be ready for school and life-long success; and



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2. Ensure that training and scholarships are available for the early childhood workforce so that they can meet the needs of the children they serve and the requirements of 2015.

In Connecticut, the Department of Labor calculates that nearly 15,000 people are directly employed in early care and education settings as teachers, childcare workers and administrators. Additionally, many more workers are teaching assistants and special education teachers in preschools and childcare centers; and health professionals working directly with children age birth-8. Over 4,200 small businesses in Connecticut are licensed to provide early care and education. These early childhood jobs are local and unlikely to ever be outsourced, and the money spent on early childhood stays in Connecticut.

The early care and education sector creates valuable opportunities for parents to work or receive additional education and training. As such, it is a critical social infrastructure for economic development. High quality early education produces important immediate economic gains by reducing turnover of employees who are also parents, lowering absenteeism of these employees, and increasing their productivity.

In today's high-tech global economy, a highly skilled workforce is essential. Research by Nobel Prize-winning economist James Heckman indicates that one of the most effective strategies for improving educational outcomes and promoting economic development is high-quality early education. A high-quality early care and education experience is the very foundation of learning that our future workforce needs. As you seek to bolster Connecticut's employment, you must also find ways to add childcare and early education to the agenda.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Good luck with the special session!



Connecticut
Early Childhood
Alliance



CONNECTICUT
VOICES
FOR CHILDREN

THE IMPACT OF THE EARLY CHILDHOOD SECTOR ON JOBS

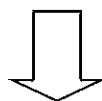


A SIGNIFICANT SECTOR OF OUR ECONOMY

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These early childhood jobs are local and unlikely to ever be outsourced, and the money spent on early childhood stays in the Connecticut economy.



CRITICALLY IMPORTANT TO WORKING PARENTS

The early care and education sector creates valuable opportunities for parents to work or receive additional education and training. As such, it is a critical social infrastructure for economic development. As policymakers seek to bolster Connecticut's employment, they also must find ways to add child care and early education.

High-quality early education produces important immediate economic gains by reducing turnover of employees who are also parents, lowering absenteeism of these employees, and increasing their productivity.

Child care is especially important for workers improving skills through job training or degree programs.



FOUNDATION OF LEARNING FOR OUR FUTURE WORKFORCE

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High-quality early care and education results in improved educational outcomes, improved social outcomes and improved economic outcomes. A 2002 cost-benefit analysis by the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis estimated that program participants earned \$143,000 more over their life-span than non-participants.

HIGH-QUALITY EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION IS A VITAL COMPONENT OF CONNECTICUT'S ECONOMY